



## Karl Friday

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### *Loving War Speaker Series*

**Karl Friday**  
University of Georgia

**"In the Company of Wolves: Samurai and the Social Order in Early Medieval Japan"**

**Wednesday, April 13, 2005**  
**12:15 p.m.**

Mershon Center for International Security Studies  
1501 Neil Avenue  
Room 120

*Click here to watch this talk.*



*Lunch will be served to those who RSVP to [Ann Powers](#) no later than Friday, April 8, 2005.*

Were the early samurai wolves amidst the fold? This question is less clear-cut than it might seem, for the samurai were, from the beginning of their history, at once a source of and a solution to violence and threats to the public order. Arising in response to policies that privatized the state's military and police system, this order of professional mercenaries functioned for nearly 300 years as the "teeth and claws" of the imperial court and the (civil) noble houses that comprised it. Over the course of the 12th and 13th centuries, however, warriors wrested control of Japan's lands and peoples from the court, and ruled the country for the next four centuries. The early samurai were men whose values centered on the concept of personal honor, but who killed with casual abandon and equal alacrity in defense of public or private employers. Their contemporaries described them as being "of imposing courage, discretion and discrimination"; as well as "like wild wolves, butchering human flesh and using it as ornaments for their bodies."

**Dr. Karl Friday** is professor of history at the University of Georgia and is the author of *Hired Swords: The Rise of Private Warrior Power in Early Japan* (1992) and *Legacies of the Sword: The Kashima-Shinryu and Samurai Martial Culture* (1997). He has spent a number of years living, training, and doing research in Japan; he presently holds the *menkyo kaiden* license and is a certified *shihan* in Kashima-Shinryu.

This talk is part of a quarter-long series arranged by Geoffrey Parker around the theme of "*Loving War*," and is offered as a graduate seminar (HST 767). The syllabus, including each speaker's recommended readings, is available [here](#).

### *About the Series:*

Many cultures today and in the past see war as good and so build up cadres of killers that threaten the security and stability of their neighbors. This asymmetry raises many issues:

- How are such cadres of killers found and trained; what motivates them; to what extent do they draw on tradition and to what extent do they forge their own? That is: do they kill because that is what their culture expects or because it works?
- Do cultures that embrace war as good have any distinctive characteristics?
- To what extent is a warrior culture natural or universal? To what extent do individual societies promote, shape, control and suppress the instinct to "love war"?
- What connects and what divides the warrior's understanding of fighting as a heroic individual pursuit and the state's conception of war as protective public policy?
- Do all societies understand, observe and enforce that distinction? If not, is the distinction a hallmark of "civilization" or "modernity"?
- What happens when this distinction is not honored?
- Above all, do the killers "just do it" or do they actually enjoy killing?

*Upcoming Events:*

April 6, 2005: [Nicola DiCosmo](#)  
April 13, 2005: [Karl Friday](#)  
April 20, 2005: [Thomas Kuehne](#)  
April 27, 2005: [Robert H. Pape](#)  
May 4: [Eliot Cohen](#)  
May 11: [Peter A. Fritzsche](#)  
May 18, 2005: [Barry Strauss](#)  
May 25, 2005: [N.A.M. Rodger](#)